



---

The Allies and Armenia, 1915-18

Author(s): Richard G. Hovannisian

Source: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Jan., 1968, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Jan., 1968), pp. 145-168

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/259971>

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Sage Publications, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of Contemporary History*

# The Allies and Armenia, 1915–18

Richard G. Hovannisian

In 1918, following centuries of foreign domination, Armenia emerged once again as an independent state, but this national rebirth was preceded by the greatest tragedy in the turbulent history of the Armenian people. Throughout 1915 and 1916 the approximately two million Armenians of the Ottoman Empire were either massacred or deported to the Syrian desert by the Ittihadist government, and in 1918 the nearly two million other Armenians beyond the Russian border in Transcaucasia were threatened with annihilation during a relentless Turkish invasion.<sup>1</sup> The plight of the Russian Armenians, who had clung desperately to Russia as the only means of salvation, was aggravated by the Bolshevik Revolution in November 1917, and the conclusion of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. That treaty not only restored to Turkey the Russian-occupied provinces of the Ottoman Empire and permitted Turkish annexation of the Transcaucasian districts of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, but also pledged the Soviet government to suppress any Armenian opposition to these provisions. Feeling abandoned by Russia and attempting to maintain a common front with their Georgian and Moslem neighbours, the Armenians finally assented, in April 1918, to the separation of Transcaucasia from Russia. Perhaps, as members of the Federative

<sup>1</sup> For documents relating to the Armenian massacres see: Great Britain, Parliament, *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, Miscellaneous No. 31* (1916) (HMSO, 1916); Johannes Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien, 1914–1918: Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke* (Potsdam, 1919); Mevlan-Zade Rifat, *Türkiye inkilabının iç yüzü* (Aleppo, 1929); Aram Andonian, *Documents officiels concernant les massacres arméniens* (Paris, 1920). For the Turkish position see: *Aspirations et agissements révolutionnaires des comités arméniens avant et après la proclamation de la constitution ottomane* (Constantinople, 1917); Ahmed Rustem Bey, *La guerre mondiale et la question turco-arménienne* (Berne, 1918); and Talaat, 'Posthumous Memoirs of Talaat Pasha', *Current History*, November 1921.

Republic of Transcaucasia, they would be spared by the Turks. The Ottoman army soon proved such hopes groundless. As Turkish divisions drove deep into Russian Armenia, the Georgians, having secured German protection, and the Moslems, enjoying the benevolence of the invaders, deserted the Armenians in May 1918, by declaring the independence of Georgia and Azerbaijan.<sup>2</sup>

In desperation, Armenian leaders groped for a way out of the unfolding calamity. With no alternative, the National Council of the Russian Armenians then proclaimed the independence of the few areas still unoccupied by the Turkish forces. This act coincided with the first substantial Armenian victory on the field of battle. In June 1918 the Turkish government, apparently unwilling to concentrate more troops against the small state until the strategic and oil-rich city of Baku had been captured, recognized the Republic of Armenia, which for the duration of the war was compelled to simulate friendship to the aggressors. The Ottoman Empire, in control of Transcaucasia's most fertile regions, now extended to within four miles of Erevan, the Armenian capital. Thousands of Armenians in the barren, landlocked republic of approximately four thousand square miles were to be swept away by famine and disease during the bitter months from May to October 1918. Indeed, it was amazing that any survived.

The defeat of the Central Powers partially dispelled the deep gloom in Erevan. With Allied assistance, this small sector of historic Armenia could gather in the Turkish occupied districts of Transcaucasia and the six eastern Ottoman provinces, so-called Turkish Armenia. Only with this additional territory could Armenia be made viable. There were many leaders who insisted that Cilicia also be included, to create an Armenia from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, citing the promises of the Allies that the Armenians would be indemnified for the outrageous crimes perpetrated against them.

In December 1918 the Armenian legislature chose Avetis Aharonian, an experienced diplomat and popular novelist, to lead

<sup>2</sup> For documents relating to these events, see: [Republic of Georgia], *Dokumenty i materialy po vneshnei politike Zakavkazia i Gruzii* (Tiflis, 1919); [Republic of Azerbaijan], *Le 28 Mai 1919* [Baku, 1919]. Many primary documents are deposited in the archives of the Republic of Armenia Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, now integrated into the archives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, in Boston, Massachusetts. The latter source will be cited hereafter as Rep. of Arm. Del.

the Republic's delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. In comparison with Georgia and Azerbaijan, Armenia now seemed to enjoy an enviable position, for these two were considered by most European governments as integral parts of Russia. Their reputation was further compromised by their wartime association with Germany and the Ottoman Empire. The Allied attitude was gratifying, for it indicated support of the Republic's territorial pretensions in Transcaucasia. On the other hand, the Entente's annexationist agreements contrasted sharply with the spirit of Allied promises. While on his way to France, Aharonian attempted to evaluate both sides of the ledger.

**Britain:** The Turkish massacres of the Armenians had horrified the world. Thousands of articles condemned the Ottoman government, recounted the history of Armenian martyrdom, and demanded restitution. On several occasions the Entente had warned Turkey that it would be held responsible for the atrocities. A statement of 24 May 1915 read:

In view of this new crime of Turkey against humanity and civilization, the Allied Governments make known publicly to the Sublime Porte that they will hold all the members of the Turkish government as well as those officials who have participated in these massacres, personally responsible.<sup>3</sup>

Subsequent Allied declarations left little doubt that, following victory, the Ottoman Empire would undergo sweeping structural and territorial changes. In January 1916 the London *Times* reported that Arthur Henderson had expressed the determination of the British workers, deeply shocked by Turkish savagery, to see that never again should a Christian people be bound by the odious Ottoman shackles.<sup>4</sup> This view was reiterated hundreds of times before the end of the year, when the *Manchester Guardian* summarized the feelings of the British people: 'Another word remains – Armenia – a word of ghastly horror, carrying the memory of deeds not done in the world since Christ was born – a country swept clear by the wholesale murder of its people. To Turkey that country must never and under no circumstances go back'.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Aspirations et agissements*, 317-8; Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* (Ankara, 1950), 618.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in A.P. Hacopian, *Armenia and the War* (London, 1917), 52.

<sup>5</sup> Reprinted in *The Times*, 30 December 1916.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

In 1917 these feelings became more intense. On 6 November Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, announced in the House of Commons that Britain was pledged to liberate those peoples whose progress had been impeded by the Ottomans. Six weeks later, on 20 December, Lloyd George, speaking in the House, repeated an earlier declaration:

What will happen to Mesopotamia must be left to the Peace Congress when it meets, but there is one thing which will never happen. It will never be restored to the blasting tyranny of the Turk . . . That same observation applies to Armenia, the land soaked with the blood of innocents, and massacred by the people who were bound to protect them.

Throughout 1918 the British continued to imply, without specifically stating, that Armenia would be established as a separate country. On 5 January the Premier listed the British war aims, one of which read:

While we do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish Empire in the homelands of the Turkish race with its capital at Constantinople – the passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea being internationalized and neutralized – Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine are in our judgment entitled to a recognition of their separate national condition.<sup>6</sup>

Replying to an opposition inquiry whether the government was keeping abreast of the struggle of the Russian Armenians against the Turks and whether the Allies were pledged to settle Armenia's future on the principle of self-determination, Balfour stated on 11 July:

Yes, Sir; His Majesty's Government are following with earnest sympathy and admiration the gallant resistance of the Armenians in defence of their liberties and honour, and are doing everything they can to come to their assistance. As regards the future of Armenia, I would refer the hon. Member to the public statements made by leading statesmen among the Allied Powers in favour of a settlement upon the principles he indicates.

A month later, Lloyd George assured a deputation from the

<sup>6</sup> Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Official Statements of War Aims and Peace Proposals, December 1916 to November 1918* (Washington, D.C. 1921), 231.

Manchester Armenian community that 'Britain will not forget its responsibilities towards your martyred race'.<sup>7</sup> Shortly thereafter, when the end of the war was in sight, Lord Robert Cecil, Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs, wrote to Lord Bryce<sup>8</sup> that the 'Charter for Armenian Justice' stemmed from the following considerations:

1. The refusal of the 1914 Armenian national congress in Erzerum to make common cause with the Turks by inciting a rebellion in the Caucasus in return for regional autonomy. The Armenians had emphasized that they would, as individuals, fulfil all obligations of Ottoman citizenship but would not provoke rebellion in the Russian Empire.
2. The martyrdom of over seven hundred thousand defenceless Armenian men, women, and children in the Ottoman Empire.
3. The services of the Russian Armenians who filled the ranks of volunteer units and played a decisive role in the most crucial battles in the Caucasus.
4. The defence of the front following the Russian desertion and the five-month stubborn resistance to the Turks, which alleviated much pressure on Britain's Mesopotamian Army.<sup>9</sup>

The Mudros Armistice between the Ottoman Empire and the Allied Powers aroused discontent in the British Parliament, since it provided neither for the immediate withdrawal of Turkish forces from Kars and Ardahan in Transcaucasia, nor for a supervised demobilization in Turkish Armenia.<sup>10</sup> In mid-November, members of both Houses of Parliament criticized the terms and advocated the use of force to effect immediate Turkish evacuation of the Armenian vilayets and, if necessary, Allied occupation of the entire region. In defence of the government's actions, Lord Cecil assured Parliament that Britain's official policy was to foster the unification of Turkish and Russian Armenia:

I recognize fully the strength of the observations that we must not allow

<sup>7</sup> Rep. of Arm. Del., File 331/1; *Armenia's Charter* (London, 1918), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Bryce initiated and supervised the preparation of *The Treatment of the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, the British Blue Book published in 1916.

<sup>9</sup> *Armenia's Charter*, 6-7; André Mandelstam, *La Société des Nations et les Puissances devant le Problème Arménien* (Paris, 1926), 311-2.

<sup>10</sup> The terms of the Mudros Armistice are in H.W.V. Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, I (London, 1920) 495-7; Frederick Maurice, *The Armistice of 1918* (London, 1943), 85-7; Turkey, Ministry of Interior, *La Guerre de l'Indépendance Turque* ([Istanbul], 1937), 7-10.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

the misdeeds of the Turks to diminish the patrimony of the Armenians. That is the general principle. I recognize the great force of what the hon. Member said – that there ought to be no division of Armenia and that it ought to be treated as one whole . . . . As far as I am concerned – and I believe in this matter I am speaking for the Government – I should be deeply disappointed if any shred or shadow of Turkish government were left in Armenia.<sup>11</sup>

On 8 November an Anglo-French declaration on Middle East objectives bound the two Entente powers to guarantee 'the complete and final emancipation of all those peoples so long oppressed by the Turks, and to establish national governments and administrations which shall derive their authority from the initiative and free will of the peoples themselves.'<sup>12</sup>

**France:** The French declarations were more stirring than the English. In April 1916 many French political, civic, and cultural leaders gathered at the Sorbonne to pay 'Hommage à l'Arménie'; to resounding applause, Anatole France exclaimed:

Armenia is dying, but it will live again. The little blood that remains is precious, and from it will be born a heroic posterity. A people which does not wish to die does not die. After the victory of our armies, which are fighting for liberty, the Allies will have great obligations to fulfil. And the most sacred of these will be to restore life to the martyred peoples, to Belgium, to Serbia. And then they will ensure the security and independence of Armenia. They will say: 'My sister, arise, suffer no longer. Henceforth you are free to live according to your own nature and your own faith.'<sup>13</sup>

Aristide Briand, Premier and Foreign Minister, wrote Senator Louis Martin during the first week of November 1916: 'When the hour for legitimate reparation shall have struck, France will not forget the terrible trials of the Armenians, and in accord with her Allies, she will take the necessary measures to ensure for Armenia a life of peace and progress'.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> GB, *Parl. Deb.*, HC, CX, cols. 3239–68; *Parl. Deb.*, HL, XXXII, cols. 34–41.

<sup>12</sup> United States, Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. 1919. The Paris Peace Conference, II* (Washington, D.C., 1942), 274. Cited hereafter as *FRUS*, and those volumes entitled *The Paris Peace Conference as PPC*. See Seth P. Tillman, *Anglo-American Relations at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919* (Princeton, 1961), 220.

<sup>13</sup> Hacobian, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>14</sup> *Le Temps*, 7 November 1916.

## THE ALLIES AND ARMENIA, 1915-18

Two months later he announced that the 'high war aims' included 'the liberation of peoples who now lie beneath the murderous tyranny of the Turks, and the expulsion from Europe of the Ottoman Empire, which has proved itself so radically alien to Western civilization'.<sup>15</sup>

On 14 July 1918, Clemenceau wrote to Boghos Nubar, an Armenian spokesman in France:

The spirit of self-sacrifice of the Armenians, their loyalty towards the Allies, their contributions to the Foreign Legion, to the Caucasus front, to the Légion d'Orient, have strengthened the ties that connect them with France. I am happy to confirm to you that the government of the Republic, like that of Great Britain, has not ceased to place the Armenian nation among the peoples whose fate the Allies intend to settle according to the supreme laws of Humanity and Justice.<sup>16</sup>

The Légion d'Orient to which Clemenceau referred had been organized under French auspices during the latter part of 1916. Composed overwhelmingly of former Armenian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, it participated in the hard fought campaigns on the Palestinian front, winning praise from French and British officers. General Allenby wrote to Boghos Nubar: 'I am proud to have an Armenian contingent under my command; it fought very brilliantly and played a great part in the victory'.<sup>17</sup> Allied officials assured the Armenian volunteers that the legion was making a vital contribution and that after victory it would form the core of the army of liberated and free Armenia.<sup>18</sup>

**United States:** In September 1916 a number of American officials formed an Armenian Relief Committee and within a short time collected a hundred thousand dollars.<sup>19</sup> President Wilson designated two days in October for a nationwide drive for Armenian relief; by early 1918 more than eleven million dollars in currency and goods had been collected, and many American volunteers had

<sup>15</sup> Lloyd George, *Memoirs* III (Boston, 1934), 64.

<sup>16</sup> Boghos Nubar, the son of an Armenian prime minister of Egypt, had been appointed in 1912 by the supreme patriarch of the Church of Armenia, Catholicos Gevorg V, to advance the Armenian cause in Europe. Rep. of Arm. Del., Files 1/1, 65/1; *Armenia's Charter*, 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> Rep. of Arm. Del., Files 1/1, 504.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, File 241/140.

<sup>19</sup> James L. Barton, *Story of Near East Relief (1915-1930)* (New York, 1930), 5-6, 12.



## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

departed for the Middle East and the Caucasus to aid the remnants of the Armenian nation.<sup>20</sup>

When in 1918 attention was turned to questions of the postwar settlement, there was substantial support for the Armenian position and for Boghos Nubar's proposal that the United States should supervise an autonomous Armenia with outlets on the Black and Mediterranean seas.<sup>21</sup> President Wilson's Fourteen Points were announced on 8 January 1918. Point XII was applicable to the Armenians:

The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees.

The statement was as vague as the declarations of the other Allied governments. 'An absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development' was open to varying interpretations. Armenophiles argued that autonomous development was conceivable only in an independent state. Yet Wilson had not mentioned independence. In July David H. Miller suggested that Point XII did not necessarily mean that Armenia would be severed from Turkey, but that perhaps one or more states might be established on Ottoman prewar territory.<sup>22</sup> Frank Cobb and Walter Lippman prepared an interpretative statement on the Fourteen Points in which they made no reference to Armenian independence, but, on the other hand, in suggesting that Armenia should have a Mediterranean seaport and a protector nation, implied at least autonomy.<sup>23</sup>

Before announcing the Fourteen Points, Wilson had asked Colonel House to study the Allied views on the postwar settlement and to formulate the stand of the United States for or against them.<sup>24</sup> To carry out the assignment, House assembled an im-

<sup>20</sup> *FRUS. 1918*, Supplement 1, *The World War*, I (Washington, D.C., 1933), 892.

<sup>21</sup> *FRUS. 1917*, Supplement 2, *The World War*, I (Washington, 1932), 791-5.

<sup>22</sup> David Hunter Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris, with Documents*, II (New York, 1928), 430-1.

<sup>23</sup> *FRUS. 1918*, Supplement 1, vol. I, 412; Charles Seymour, ed., *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*, IV (Boston, 1928), 199-200.

<sup>24</sup> Lawrence E. Gelfand, *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917-1919* (New Haven, 1963), 26; Ray S. Baker, *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters*, VII (New York, 1939), 254.

## THE ALLIES AND ARMENIA, 1915-18

pressive array of historians, economists, and experts in military and cultural affairs. On 22 December 1917, the Inquiry submitted its preliminary recommendations, among which was the following:

... we must secure a guaranteed autonomy for the Armenians, not only as a matter of justice and humanity but in order to reestablish the one people in Asia Minor capable of preventing economic monopolization of Turkey by the Germans ... It is necessary to free the subject races of the Turkish Empire from oppression and misrule. This implies at the very least autonomy for Armenia and the protection of Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Arabia by the civilized nations.<sup>25</sup>

In September 1918 the Department of State issued a memorandum to guide the American peace delegation. Point 17 read:

Armenia and Syria to be created into protectorate of such Government or Governments as seem expedient from domestic as well as international point of view, with guarantees that they to be self governing as soon as possible and that open door in commercial-economic fields to be strictly observed.<sup>26</sup>

This was amplified by Westermann, the Inquiry's chief specialist on Middle Eastern affairs, in his 'Report on Just and Practical Boundaries for the Turkish Empire'. He advocated the establishment of Armenia as a separate state, and the internationalization of Constantinople and the Straits. Because so many Armenians had perished, they would constitute barely thirty-five per cent of the population in the lands set aside for them; therefore strong international control would be indispensable.<sup>27</sup>

As the Peace Conference convened in January 1919, the Inquiry, now operating as the American delegation's Division of Territorial and Economic Intelligence, made detailed recommendations. An Armenian state encompassing the six eastern Ottoman vilayets, the Black Sea littoral around Trebizond, and the Mediterranean Sea coast around Adana should be established, with the Taurus and Anti-Taurus mountain chains constituting its southern and western boundaries. The Armenians of Transcaucasia should be

<sup>25</sup> The plans, administration, and operation of the Inquiry are included in *FRUS. PPC*, I (Washington, D.C., 1942), 9-188, and Gelfand, *op. cit.*, 33-113; *FRUS. PPC*, II, 43, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (Boston, 1921), 195-6.

<sup>27</sup> Gelfand, *op. cit.*, 248-9.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

granted permanent independence, and the provinces of Erevan and Kars, together with the adjoining districts of Akhalkalak and Akhaltsikh, could then be united with the Armenian areas to be separated from the Ottoman Empire. The granting of this disproportionate amount of land was justified 'by such extenuating circumstances as the persecutions and exploitations to which the Armenians had been subjected in the past'. The plan was somewhat ambiguous, for while recommending 'complete and permanent independence' for the Russian Armenians, it only implied the same for the Turkish Armenians.<sup>28</sup>

While the Inquiry had left certain questions unanswered, the powerful American Committee for the Independence of Armenia persistently advanced its steadfast convictions. This bipartisan organization, composed of many members of Congress, leading educators and clergymen, philanthropists and industrialists, called upon Washington to recognize the existing Armenian Republic, to champion its right to the six vilayets and Cilicia, to grant it military, economic, and cultural assistance, and to reject the unjust territorial ambitions of the European Allies. Strongly backed by President Wilson, who by this time had publicly called for Armenian independence, the Committee was to occasion much discomfort and distress to Secretary of State Lansing, who advocated a 'rational' approach in pursuance of a lasting world settlement. Its Congressional members were very active. On 14 October 1918, Congressman Edward C. Little introduced Joint Resolution 336, which read:

Resolved, That the Armenian people are entitled to be a free and independent nation with access to the sea and to secure the advantages of that Christian civilization for which they have been martyred. The Republic of Ararat [the Erevan government] should be given universal recognition.<sup>29</sup>

Two months later, on 10 December, Henry Cabot Lodge introduced Senate Resolution 378:

Resolved, That in the opinion of the Senate, Armenia, including the six

<sup>28</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*, IV, 229, 259, 260; Gelfand, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-255; US, National Archives, *Record Group 256*: Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace (cited hereafter as US Archives, RG 256), 185.112/1.

<sup>29</sup> Rep. of Arm. Del. File 379/1. Reference to the resolution is in the *Congressional Record*, 14 October 1918, 11264.

## THE ALLIES AND ARMENIA, 1915-18

vilayets of Turkish Armenia and Cilicia, Russian Armenia, and the northern part of the Province of Azerbaijan, Persian Armenia, should be independent and that it is the hope of the Senate that the peace conference will make arrangements for helping Armenia to establish an independent republic.<sup>30</sup>

Senator Lodge favoured giving the Armenians what they might have envisaged only in their most delirious dreams; even the Aharonian delegation, with instructions to remain silent about Cilicia, was soon to succumb to the euphoria that engulfed the Armenian world. The prospect of Russian Armenia, Turkish Armenia, and Cilicia joined into an 'independent Armenia from Sea to Sea' was a lure few could resist.

It was against such a backdrop of Allied pronouncements that the Armenian delegation travelled to Paris. But Aharonian knew that the secret wartime agreements had not been repudiated. These pacts looked especially foreboding when placed beside the radiant promises made to the Armenians. In 1915 and 1916, during the most bitter agony of that people, the Entente arranged the partition of the Ottoman Empire. Britain, France, and Russia were to annex large tracts of Turkish territory; apparently the Armenian problem could be settled by acquiring for themselves the territories essential to the Armenian design for autonomy or independence.

Following Turkey's surprise attack on the Russian Black Sea installations in October 1914, the Tsar turned his attention once again to the possibility of gaining an outlet to the Mediterranean. On 7 November the French Foreign Minister, Delcassé, told the Russian ambassador Izvolsky that the Entente should pursue a common policy towards Turkey; two days later the British Foreign Secretary assured ambassador Benckendorff that the Straits question would be settled in conformity with Russian interests. The Russian Foreign Minister, Sazonov, returned the favour on 18 November by endorsing the British annexation of Egypt, which was made a protectorate the following month.<sup>31</sup> Yet

<sup>30</sup> *Congressional Record*, 10 December 1918, 237.

<sup>31</sup> *Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del SSSR, Konstantinopol i Prolivny po sekretnym dokumentam b. ministerstva inostrannykh del*, ed. E.A. Adamov, I (Moscow, 1925), 228, 232, 234-5, cited hereafter as *Konstantinopol*. Also Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey. A Diplomatic History, 1919-1923* (Norman, Okla., 1931), p. 120.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

mutual suspicions were not allayed. When, in January 1915, London revealed its plans for the Gallipoli campaign, Sazonov expressed misgivings and urged postponement. When the attack was nonetheless launched, Russia demanded definite guarantees regarding her interests in Turkey. On 1 March Sazonov asked Maurice Paléologue and George Buchanan, French and British ambassadors to Petrograd, for the formal consent of their governments to Russian annexation of Constantinople.<sup>32</sup>

From Paris, Izvolsky warned Sazonov on 4 March that, if Constantinople were occupied without Russian participation, an advantageous settlement would be difficult to attain. Delcassé had already indicated that Russian possession of the Asiatic shore of the Straits depended on a suitable Allied arrangement for the partition of Turkey.<sup>33</sup> On the same day Sazonov flatly announced to Paléologue and Buchanan that a lasting solution was impossible unless there were included within the boundaries of Russia 'the city of Constantinople, the western shore of the Bosphorus, Sea of Marmora, and Dardanelles, as well as southern Thrace up to the Enos-Midia line', and 'a part of the Asiatic coast between the Bosphorus, the Sakarya River, and a point to be determined on the shore of the Bay of Ismid'. He requested the goodwill of Britain and France, promising in return 'the Allied governments may be assured that they will meet, on the part of the Imperial Government, the same sympathy for the realization of plans which they may have in regard to other regions of the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere'.<sup>34</sup> During the diplomatic exchanges of the next few days, Paris and London showed themselves amenable to the Russian proposal and also clarified their own expectations. Both required guarantees concerning transit rights through the Straits and commercial privileges at Constantinople. Moreover, Britain asked, among other things, that Arabia and the Holy Land be formed into a separate Moslem state and that the 1907 Anglo-Russian settlement regarding Persia be revised to include the neu-

<sup>32</sup> Maurice Paléologue, *An Ambassador's Memoirs*, Eng. trans. I (6th ed., New York, [1924]), 295.

<sup>33</sup> *Konstantinopol*, I, 254-5; Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del SSSR, *Razdel Aziatskoi Turtsii po sekretnym dokumentam b. ministerstva inostrannykh del*, ed. E.A. Adamov (Moscow, 1924), pp. 117-8, cited hereafter as *Razdel*.

<sup>34</sup> Great Britain, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, 1st series, ed. E.L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (cited hereafter as *BD*), IV (London, 1952), 635-6; *Konstantinopol*, I, 252.

tral areas within the existing British sphere of influence.<sup>35</sup> The Tsar readily agreed 'in principle'.<sup>36</sup> On 14 March Paléologue declared that France 'desires to annex Syria, including the province of the Gulf of Alexandretta, and Cilicia to the Taurus Range'.<sup>37</sup> Nicholas acquiesced two days later.<sup>38</sup> He was willing to forgo Cilicia in return for Constantinople. But the Russians were still uneasy, for no formal documents had been exchanged. In Paris, Izvolsky kept prodding Delcassé until the Foreign Minister secured approval from the French cabinet. On 10 April the Constantinople-Straits agreement was sealed by a French *note verbale* delivered to Sazonov.<sup>39</sup> The planned partition of the Ottoman Empire was well under way.

While these negotiations were in progress, the Tsar was assuring his Armenian subjects that they, and especially their brothers across the border in Turkey, would be guaranteed 'a most brilliant future'.<sup>40</sup> The Imperial government had already sponsored the creation of Armenian volunteer units in the Caucasus to assist in the 'liberation of Turkish Armenia' and had indicated that the area would receive autonomy under Russian protection.<sup>41</sup> The Foreign Ministry had discussed this plan with the Armenian leader, Dr Hakob Zavriev, and had even sent him to western Europe to win Allied approval.

The correspondence of ranking Russian officials, however, reveals that there was, in fact, absolutely no intention to grant autonomy to either Russian or Turkish Armenia. In April 1915 General Yudenich, field commander of the Caucasus Army, reported to the Viceroy for the Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, on the future of the Alashkert Plain and the Bayazit Valley in Turkish Armenia:

The Armenians intend to occupy by means of their refugees the lands

<sup>35</sup> *BD*, IV, 636-8; *Konstantinopol*, I, 275-7.

<sup>36</sup> C. Jay Smith, *The Russian Struggle for Power, 1914-1917* (New York, [1956]), 230.

<sup>37</sup> *Razdel*, 127.

<sup>38</sup> Paléologue, *op. cit.*, I, 303.

<sup>39</sup> *Konstantinopol*, I, 295.

<sup>40</sup> Gr. Tchalkhouchian, *Le livre rouge* (Paris, 1919), 15.

<sup>41</sup> The most comprehensive account of the campaigns of the volunteer units is the study by General G. Korganoff, *La participation des Arméniens à la guerre mondiale sur le front du Caucase, 1914-1918* (Paris, 1927).

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

left by the Kurds and Turks, in order to benefit from that territory. I consider this intention unacceptable because after the war it will be difficult to reclaim those lands sequestered by the Armenians, or to prove that the seized property does not belong to them, as was the case after the Russo-Turkish War [of 1877-1878]. I consider it very desirable to populate the border regions with a Russian element . . . with colonists from the Kuban and Don and in that way to form a Cossack region along the border.<sup>42</sup>

A memorandum in similar vein had been sent to Sazonov in March 1915 by the Minister of Agriculture, Krivoshein:

The success of our military activities on the Turkish front gives us reason to think that, in the near future, we will have the opportunity to correct our Caucasian boundary and to round out our possession of Asia Minor and Armenia. [After discussing the agricultural possibilities in the Black Sea coastal districts, he continued] the other region, which falls southeast of the former, is the basin of the upper reaches of the Araxes and Euphrates, generally called Armenia. This region is mostly high above sea level and is wholly suitable for Russian colonists.<sup>43</sup>

An exchange of notes between Sazonov and Izvolsky, after Dr Zavriev had arrived in Paris to secure France's blessing for an autonomous Armenia, reveals the contradiction between Russian words and deeds. On 17 May 1915 Izvolsky informed the Foreign Minister:

Dr Zavriev, who has arrived here, has presented a memorandum to me about the results of his talks in our Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This says, among other things, that Russia intends to propose to the governments that within the Turkish boundaries there be created an autonomous Armenia, under Turkish suzerainty and the protection of the three governments, Russia, England, and France. Its territory is to encompass not only all the Armenian provinces, except for a few border districts, but also Cilicia with a seaport on the Mediterranean at Mersina. . . . The point in relation to Cilicia is, I feel, especially delicate, because France has already informed us of its ambitions concerning the area.

<sup>42</sup> Gabriel Lazian, *Hayastan ev Hai Date (Vaveragr)* (Cairo, 1946), 199-200; Tchalkhouchian, *op. cit.*, 54-5.

<sup>43</sup> Ashot Hovhannisian, compiler, *Hayastani avtonomian ev Antantan: Vaveragr imperialistakan paterazmi shrdjanits* (Erevan, 1926), 77-9; *Razdel*, 360-2.

## THE ALLIES AND ARMENIA, 1915-18

On the following day Sazonov replied: 'Our talks with the Armenians were of a completely academic character'.<sup>44</sup>

While Sazonov was conducting these academic talks with Armenian leaders, the Entente was attempting to entice Italy into the war. In March 1915 Italy offered to join the Allies in return for a number of territorial gains, primarily along the eastern coast of the Adriatic, and the Dodecanese Islands, and, should the Ottoman Empire be partitioned, the Adalia vilayet. Though Petrograd did not relish another finger in the pie, Sazonov yielded to the insistence of Grey and Delcassé. On 26 April Grey, Benckendorff, and the French and Italian ambassadors to Britain signed the Treaty of London, which, in addition to marking broad areas for Italian expansion, bound Rome to enter the war within one month. On 23 May Italy complied.<sup>45</sup>

By the end of 1915, the Gallipoli campaign had bogged down in dismal failure. General Townshend was in serious trouble in Mesopotamia, and the German armies in the European theatres were straining Allied resources. These problems prompted the British to hasten the conclusion of negotiations with Arab leaders for an uprising in the southern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. In return the Arabs were guaranteed a separate state or states following the war. The French and British now found it advisable to define their plans for western Asia. The resulting Sykes-Picot accord was the most comprehensive Entente secret agreement. When Sir Mark Sykes, of the Foreign Office, discussed the question with Georges Picot, former French Consul-General in Beirut, the Russians were informed that these Paris meetings were to deal only with Arab matters and that Petrograd would be kept informed. Much more than Arab matters was involved, however, as Sykes and Picot coloured in and lettered a map of nearly the whole of western Asia. The Sykes-Picot provisional arrangement of 10 February 1916 gave France 'direct or indirect' rule over the Blue Zone encompassing Lebanon, the Syrian coast, Cilicia, and territory protruding onto the Anatolian highlands and along the Taurus Mountains as far as the Persian border. Mesopotamia,

<sup>44</sup> *Razdel*, 135-6.

<sup>45</sup> For the negotiations and final agreement, see Smith, *op. cit.*, 243-70; *Konstantinopol*, I, 305-35; and R. W. Seton-Watson, 'Italian Intervention and the Secret Treaty of London', *The Slavonic Review*, December 1926.



## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

from Baghdad to the frontier of Persia and to the Persian Gulf, as well as the Mediterranean ports of Acre and Haifa, were included in the British Red Zone. Most of Palestine, the Brown Zone, was reserved for a future agreement on the Holy Land, in which Russia would participate. The Arabs were to be permitted to establish their state or states in the remaining desert areas, but even these were divided into zones of British and French influence. Most of inland Syria and Northern Mesopotamia fell within French Zone A, while included within British Zone B was the area adjoining the Red Zone in Mesopotamia and stretching from the border of Persia to Palestine and the Arabian peninsula. In return for waiving their plan to annex all of Syria and Palestine, the French had now been permitted deeper penetration into Anatolia and along the Taurus, areas coveted by Russians and Armenians alike.<sup>46</sup>

Now in accord, the Anglo-French partners turned to the delicate task of winning Russia's approval. On 9 March Sazonov received Sykes and Picot in Petrograd. During that interview, the 10 February project was read and Russia was given the assurance that she would participate in determining the future of Palestine and that the western members of the Entente would raise no objection were the Tsar to decide to annex the Erzerum, Van, and Bitlis vilayets and portions of the Trebizond, Sivas, and Kharput vilayets – that is, the Armenian Plateau. Sazonov was astonished, for he had been unaware that the Anglo-French negotiations had been so comprehensive. He pointed out that, while the Straits agreement had permitted French domination in Syria and Cilicia, the present proposal added most of Diarbekir and the Taurus lands. Picot defended the modification on the basis of natural geographic boundaries and also pointed to the long-established Roman Catholic influence in the Taurus, populated by many Nestorian and Chaldean Christians.<sup>47</sup> Sazonov remained unconvinced.

After two days of bickering, Buchanan submitted to Sazonov a revised map of western Asia on which the French Blue had been erased from part of the Taurus region and the Bitlis passes. The eastward thrust of France would be broken at the River Tigris. To compensate Paris, much of the Sivas vilayet, formerly reserved for

<sup>46</sup> *Razdel*, 151–7; Hovhannisian, *op. cit.*, 25.

<sup>47</sup> 'Dnevnik Ministerstva Inostrannykh Del za 1915–1916 gg.', *Krasny Arkhiv*, XXXII, 19–20, cited hereafter as *Dnevnik*.

Russia, had now been coloured blue. A memorandum prepared by Sykes in support of this compromise gave a distorted appraisal of the Armenians and their aspirations. He began by asserting that, because of the recent Turkish atrocities, the Armenians could never again be left under Ottoman bondage. There were four possible ways of resolving the question:

1. *The formation of an Armenian government under Turkish suzerainty.* This would, however, signify either the creation of a second Bulgaria spinning plots in the Caucasus, or else an unworkable solution, for the Armenians could not compete militarily with the Kurds.
2. *The creation of an Armenian government with international protection.* This would expose the area to continual intrigue, from which Germany would sooner or later benefit.
3. *The inclusion of all Armenia in Russia.* This would burden the Tsar with a province largely inhabited by revolutionary syndicalists maintaining close bonds with subversive elements in Persia and the Caucasus.
4. *A partition of Armenia that would give former Roman or Lesser Armenia to France, while Russia would annex the remaining portions of the Armenian Plateau.* This was the best solution.<sup>48</sup>

In advancing the fourth alternative, Sykes noted that it would encumber Russia with a minimum of Armenians, since Kurds and Lazes constituted the overwhelming majority of the Plateau. Armenia, as he understood the term, would under French administration become the centre of Armenian national sentiment. This would be especially advantageous for Russia, for while the Armenians of the Caucasus and eastern vilayets were 'anarcho-socialists', those of Lesser Armenia were religious and conservative; Sykes claimed that the inhabitants of the areas within the former Latin and French-oriented Kingdom of Cilician Armenia, had little in common with the Armenians on the Plateau to the east. However, were all Armenia annexed by the Romanovs, the natural administrative centre would be Erzerum, enabling the 'anarcho-socialists' to seize political control and extend their tyranny as far as Cilicia. Sykes concluded that Russia could spare herself much anguish by also waiving her right to the Plain of Mush, for as part of French Armenia this den of sedition would be neutralized and

<sup>48</sup> Razdel, 157.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

the Caucasus and Azerbaijan would be denied this wellspring of revolutionaries.<sup>49</sup> Unfortunately, the British Near East expert did not reveal the source which inspired his most interesting observations.

Reporting to the Tsar on 13 March, Sazonov noted that the Sykes-Picot boundaries did follow topographic lines but were politically and strategically unacceptable. He advised limiting the French to what had been granted by the Straits agreement but added that, were more concessions necessary so that Russia could acquire the Bitlis passes and Taurus region, then France might be allowed to extend her Cilician holdings to include the Caesarea-Kharput-Sivas triangle. Nicholas wrote in the margin of the report, 'I concur'.<sup>50</sup> The next day Sykes again urged Sazonov to accept this compromise, which would not only remove the French from the neighbourhood of the Russo-Persian border, but would give Russia a primarily Moslem population, which, 'from the viewpoint of state security, represents a more hopeful and satisfactory element' than did the Armenians. Sazonov was sufficiently convinced to inform Buchanan and Paléologue on 17 March that the Sykes proposal was acceptable in principle on condition that the Straits agreement was enforced.<sup>51</sup>

Sazonov then defended the compromise before a special committee composed of the President of the Council of Ministers, the ministers of Foreign Affairs, War, and Navy, and a representative of the Viceroy for the Caucasus. When Nikolsky, director of the Viceroy's chancellery, interjected that the partition of their lands would elicit a sharp reaction from the Armenians, Sazonov reiterated the contention that the division corresponded to topographical peculiarities and religious denominational groupings. Since it was not possible to create a united Armenia, those Christians left outside of Russia would find much more security under the wings of France than under Turkey, which had caused them so much suffering and sorrow.<sup>52</sup>

On 31 March Picot conveyed France's decision to relinquish the lands south of Bitlis and Van in return for the areas between Kharput, Caesarea, and Sivas. Following another session of the

<sup>49</sup> Hovhannisian, *op. cit.*, 27-9; *Razdel*, 159.

<sup>50</sup> *Razdel*, 160-1.

<sup>51</sup> *Dnevnik*, 22-3; Smith, *op. cit.*, 371; *Razdel*, 163-4.

<sup>52</sup> *Dnevnik*, 26-8; *Razdel*, 172-4.

## THE ALLIES AND ARMENIA, 1915-18

Russian committee, Sazonov informed Paléologue on 26 April that the Imperial government approved the Sykes-Picot arrangement as modified during the Petrograd discussions. Paléologue immediately acknowledged the memorandum and corroborated the concurrence of France; the round of Anglo-Russian confirmations was completed on 1 September 1916.<sup>53</sup> The flags of the Entente nations had been pinned on the map of Asiatic Turkey.

In the light of these negotiations, the sudden reversal of official tsarist policy towards the Armenians becomes much clearer. By 1916, the apparent respect for Armenian political and civic bodies and for the volunteer units had been transformed into distrust. The volunteers were accused of lawlessness and looting, and although most of Turkish Armenia was under firm Russian control, refugees were forbidden to return to their native districts without first presenting valid property deeds, a requirement few could fulfil. The new Viceroy for the Caucasus, the Grand Duke Nicholas, then ordered the disbanding of the Armenian volunteer units and imposed strict censorship upon all Armenian publications.<sup>54</sup>

Any hope that the Armenians might still have had for autonomy was dashed by the 'Rules for the Temporary Administration of Turkish Areas occupied by the Right of War', signed on 18 June 1916 by the Russian Chief of Staff, General Alekseev.<sup>55</sup> These combined the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire into a military governorship. 'Armenia' or 'Armenian' were terms not to be found in the Rules, which were so worded that they might apply to any militarily occupied territory. Instead of the autonomy envisaged by the Armenians, the Rules instructed the officials of the governor-generalship

to reestablish and defend law and order, to protect the life, honour, property, religious-civil liberties of the inhabitants, to consider all nationalities equal before the Russian government, and to guarantee

<sup>53</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, 371; *Razdel*, 170-1, 199-200; the British and French governments mutually confirmed the Sykes-Picot agreement by an exchange of notes on 15-16 May 1916. See *BD*, IV, 244-7.

<sup>54</sup> Rep. of Arm. Del., File 1/1.

<sup>55</sup> Hovhannisian, *op. cit.*, 91-3; Georgian SSR Central State Historical Archives, Fund 154, folder 1, 1917, 3-43, in A.N. Mnatsakanian, *V. I. Lenin ev hai zhoghovrdi azatagraken paikare* (Erevan, 1963), 224-5.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

these inhabitants the possibility of free and tranquil labour, on condition that they submit *in toto* to the suzerainty of Russia.

General Peshkov, appointed governor-general in the summer of 1916, began preparations for the direct and unconditional annexation of the Armenian Plateau to the vast Romanov Empire.<sup>56</sup>

In Petrograd, Miliukov, speaking for the liberal bloc in the State Duma, questioned the policy of the government and reported that General Yanushkevich, a close associate of Grand Duke Nicholas, had encouraged Kurds to adopt a settled way of life at the expense of the Armenians, whose families had been murdered by those same tribesmen. 'We are more friendly to them than to our old friends', he said.<sup>57</sup>

Sazonov outlined the official position in a letter to the Viceroy for the Caucasus. Writing on 27 June 1916, he pointed out that Russia might satisfy the Armenians by granting full autonomy to Turkish Armenia as provided for in the reform measure sponsored by the Imperial government before the war,<sup>58</sup> or could reduce the political significance of the Armenians to zero. Neither alternative was desirable or beneficial to Russia. Autonomy was impractical, since Armenians had never constituted a majority in the area, and, because of the recent massacres, would now compose scarcely a fourth of the total population. In these conditions, 'Armenian autonomy will result unjustly in the minority enslaving the dominant element'. On the other hand, favouritism should not be shown the Moslems because this would make conditions for the Armenians more unbearable than under the Ottoman regime and

<sup>56</sup> S. Vratzian, *Hayastani Hanrapetutium* (Beirut, 1958), 15.

<sup>57</sup> Tchalkhouchian, *op. cit.*, 55-6; Leo [A. Babakhanian], *Tiurkahai hagh-apokhutian gaghaparabanutiune*, II (Paris, 1935), 192-3.

<sup>58</sup> A plan for reforms in Turkish Armenia had been forced upon the Ottoman government in February 1914, following months of negotiations between the European Powers. Details of the original Russian proposals, the subsequent negotiations, and the final compromise measure are included in the following works: Roderic H. Davison, 'The Armenian Crisis (1912-1914)', *The American Historical Review*, April 1948; André Mandelstam, *Le sort de l'empire Ottoman* (Paris, 1917), 214-38; Russia, Ministerstvo Inostrannykh Del, *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov: Reformy v Armenii, 26 noiabria 1912 goda - 10 maia 1914 goda* (Petrograd, 1915); France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français (1871-1914)*, 3<sup>e</sup> série, VII (Paris, 1934); Germany, Auswärtiges Amt, *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914, XXXVIII* (Berlin, 1926); Great Britain, Foreign Office, *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, ed. G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, X, 1 (London, 1936).

## THE ALLIES AND ARMENIA, 1915-18

would make them envious of their compatriots in the French-controlled regions. 'Thus, the Armenians in certain areas might enjoy educational and ecclesiastical freedoms, be permitted to use their mother tongue, and be granted municipal and rural self-government . . .' The same should apply to non-Christians.<sup>59</sup>

Grand Duke Nicholas agreed and replied on 16 July:

It is my profound conviction that there is at present within the bounds of the Russian Empire absolutely no Armenian question, nor should even mention of such a question be permitted, for the Russian Armenian subjects within the Viceroyalty are, like Moslems, Georgians, and Russians, equal subjects of Russia.

He added that if an Armenian problem ever existed, it was outside Russia and before the war. Any idea of Armenian autonomy would now only complicate matters, although of course religious and linguistic freedoms were permissible.<sup>60</sup>

In April 1917 France, Britain, and Italy concluded the treaty of St Jean de Maurienne, by which Rome accepted the terms of the Sykes-Picot agreement in return for additional concessions in the Adalia and Smyrna regions of Turkey. But this final wartime arrangement was not ratified by Russia, which after the Revolution of March 1917 wavered between harvesting the rich loot of conquest and renouncing all in pursuance of the Petrograd Soviet's motto, 'Peace without annexations or indemnities'.

By the end of May, Prince Lvov's Provisional Government realized that a reexamination of the secret agreements was imperative. Tereshchenko, the Foreign Minister, instructed his Washington ambassador, Bakhmetev, to lay the problem before the United States government. When Bakhmetev cautiously broached the topic, Lansing indicated that the Entente should disavow any annexationist ambitions. The Russians agreed, and hoped that the United States would persuade France and Britain.<sup>61</sup> Until that time, the Provisional Government would not openly betray its allies and therefore rejected the proposal to publish the treaties. That was left to the Bolsheviks.

In December 1918, when preparations for the peace conference

<sup>59</sup> *Razdel*, 207-9; Smith, *op. cit.*, 380-1.

<sup>60</sup> *Razdel*, 211-2; Leo, *op. cit.*, II, 193-4.

<sup>61</sup> *Razdel*, 343-5.

## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

were well advanced, there was still considerable uncertainty concerning the Anglo-French attitude toward the wartime pacts. On 27 December Briand announced in the Chamber of Deputies that the agreements would be enforced if both the legislature and Peace Conference sanctioned them.<sup>62</sup> Two days later his Foreign Minister Pichon spoke of French rights in Armenia, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, based on 'historic contentions and recent contracts'.<sup>63</sup>

British postwar formulations for peace relating to the Arab provinces conformed closely to the secret agreements. What was not to be taken directly would be governed under mandate. However, since the Bolsheviks were now in control of Russia, certain modifications were in order. A Foreign Office memorandum stressed that all non-Turkish peoples of the Ottoman Empire should be liberated, but Turks could retain those lands where they constituted the preponderant element. If, however, the Turks failed to respect the rights of the minorities, they would be deprived of these areas as well. Furthermore, the definition of self-determination could be altered in reference to the Armenians and Jews because of their claim 'to special consideration out of proportion to their present numerical strength in the Middle Eastern countries'. The Armenians would be given certain territories even though they might not constitute the majority therein. An independent Armenian state encompassing the six eastern vilayets, with an extension to the Mediterranean, was advocated. The Transcaucasian Armenian republic could unite with this area and receive provisional recognition from the Peace Conference. Since the Armenians would probably be a minority in their own country, it was necessary that a mandatory power intercede to maintain peace and assist in reconstruction. Because they were a prolific people and because thousands of their deportees would soon return, the Armenians would before long emerge as the dominant element.<sup>64</sup> Certainly Aharonian would have been pleased with such a settlement, but when his mission arrived in Paris, they found that the Republic of Armenia was denied a place in the council that was to determine its fate.

<sup>62</sup> Harry N. Howard, *The King-Crane Commission* (Beirut, 1963), 9.

<sup>63</sup> *New York Times*, 2 January 1919.

<sup>64</sup> Howard, *King-Crane*, 13-5.

## THE ALLIES AND ARMENIA, 1915-18

While in Europe making arrangements for the peace conference, Colonel House met with the Allied representatives to decide which nations should be invited to attend, after which David Miller prepared a memorandum for the Department of State suggesting that, of the former Russian Empire, only Poland and Finland, having received recognition by some states, were qualified for admission. Still:

In view of the existing circumstances in Russia, and until a favorable change therein, it would seem impracticable to admit formally to the Peace Congress any representative, either of Russia as a whole or of any of its nationalities which may have attempted to set up separate governments . . . National groups not forming states, such as the Armenians, the Jews in Palestine, and the Arabs, would doubtless be received and heard through their representatives by Committees of the Congress, but could not be admitted to the Congress as member Powers.<sup>65</sup>

Miller and James B. Scott embodied this view in a skeleton draft treaty they submitted to the Secretary of State on 30 December 1918. The Czecho-Slovak, Finnish, and Polish states could participate in the peace conference, but, although 'independence is claimed for Armenia', there was no need to include it as a member.<sup>66</sup>

When the list of accepted delegations was published in January 1919, the Armenian communities and their supporters protested energetically. Who more than the Armenians had the right to be officially represented? They had fought, they had died, they had remained loyal to the Allied cause, they had proclaimed a republic, they had established a government, they aspired to complete freedom and international recognition! The explanation that Armenia would have no seat because officially it had not been a belligerent was dismissed; the Czechs, Poles, and Yugoslavs, none independent when the war began, were to be admitted to the peace conference, as were many nations which had not sacrificed a single man. How could Armenia, a cobelligerent which had given half of her population, be excluded? These arguments gained the support of some officials as well. Westermann wrote to the State Department on 25 January that Armenia's request was wholly justified, and urged sympathetic consideration of Armenian complaints, and

<sup>65</sup> *FRUS. PPC*, I, 362-3.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 311-2.



## CONTEMPORARY HISTORY

the assurance that the United States would support their reasonable demands.<sup>67</sup> President Wilson himself had made such a pledge to Boghos Nubar; though Armenia, still not recognized as a sovereign state, would not be admitted, her cause would be represented.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, when Aharonian arrived in France in late January 1919, the possibility of being seated had all but vanished. While no effective measures were being taken to disband the Turkish forces in the eastern vilayets, the diplomats in Paris closed the doors upon the Armenian delegation. Aharonian continued to present his demand. Armenia, abandoned by Russia at Brest-Litovsk, had alone held the Caucasus front, delaying for months the German-Turkish advance on Baku and relieving pressure on the Allies. Did Emir Feisal, the Arab leader admitted to the conference, have a greater claim to membership than the representatives of Armenia, already an organized state?<sup>69</sup> During the following months, the Armenian suppliants could do no more than appear occasionally before the various councils of the peace conference and flood every delegation in Paris with hundreds of charts, graphs, and memoranda. Not until January 1920 were the Allied Powers to recognize the Republic of Armenia; in August of that year the Turkish representative signed the Treaty of Sèvres, which awarded much of the great Plateau to Armenia. However, the continued contradiction between Allied words and Allied deeds, the failure to enforce the terms of the Mudros Armistice, the emergence of the Turkish nationalist movement, and the southward expansion of Soviet Russia were destined to deprive Armenia of the rewards embodied in that treaty.

<sup>67</sup> US Archives, RG 256, 183.9 Armenia/5.

<sup>68</sup> 'Armenia and the Peace Conference', *New Armenia*, March 1919, 63.

<sup>69</sup> US Archives, RG 256, F. W. 867B.00/49; Rep. of AIR. Del., File 230/129, no. 39.